

HPSCI MINORITY STAFF REPORT ON COVID-19 ORIGINS – UNCLASSIFIED SUMMARY

- Our investigation revealed serious shortcomings with both the classified and declassified versions of the Intelligence Community’s (IC) *Updated Assessment on COVID-19 Origins* (Updated Assessment).
- The IC withheld key information from the public in the declassified version of its Updated Assessment, information that could have been shared without damaging national security. These omissions likely skewed the public’s understanding of key issues and deepened mistrust.
- For example, the declassified report claimed the IC was able to reach “broad agreement” that the virus was not developed as a biological weapon. Despite the fact the IC relayed its confidence levels for nearly every other assessment in the declassified report – low confidence, moderate confidence, etc. – the IC failed to disclose to the public its confidence level regarding this bioweapons assessment.
- Contrary to the implication of the IC’s declassified report, based on our investigation involving a variety of public and non-public information, we conclude that there are indications that SARS-CoV-2 may have been tied to China’s biological weapons research program and spilled over to the human population during a lab-related incident at the Wuhan Institute of Virology. The IC failed to adequately address this information in its classified Updated Assessment. When we attempted to raise the issues with the IC, it failed to respond.
- The IC also failed to correct a key claim in the classified version when additional and important information undermining that claim was available. The IC again failed to respond when we raised the discrepancy.
- The IC should be transparent regarding what it does or does not know regarding the relationship between the Fifth Institute of the PLA’s Academy of Military Medical Sciences, which China has publicly admitted conducts bioweapons research and coronavirus experiments, and the Wuhan Institute of Virology, particularly during 2019. It should also be transparent regarding any information it may have about Fifth Institute General Zhou Yusen, both regarding his research and the circumstances of his death.
- The Committee believes the IC downplayed important information relating to the possible links between COVID-19 and China’s bioweapons research based in part on input from outside experts. The IC refuses to be transparent with the Committee regarding which experts it relied on. The Committee legally restricted a portion of the IC’s funding until it fully cooperates – but the IC thumbed its nose at Congress and unlawfully obligated the restricted funds anyway, without satisfying the Committee’s request.
- The Committee has also learned that U.S. taxpayer funds have been funneled to the Fifth Institute via U.S. universities who sub-awarded their grant funds to it. The Committee does not know if the scientists who funneled this money to the Fifth Institute, a known component of China’s bioweapons program, were among the experts the IC consulted regarding COVID-19’s origins.
- We have not seen any credible indication that the virus was intentionally, rather than accidentally, released. Nor do we claim the information we have found is a smoking gun that definitively resolves the question of the origins of COVID-19 beyond all doubt. However, the information is important to furthering the public’s understanding, and we will seek to declassify the classified version of our report in the next Congress to further the conversation. Further, The Committee plans to explore all means at its disposal to require the IC to fully cooperate and comply until our requests are met with adequate information.